HECLA GRINDSTONE

PROVINCIAL PARKS

DRAFT MANAGEMENT PLAN

SUMMARY OF PUBLIC INPUT

Manitoba
Natural Resources
Parks

88-01044/

SUMMARY OF PUBLIC INPUT
AND REVISIONS TO THE
DRAFT MANAGEMENT PLAN

MANAGEMENT PLAN FOR
HECLA PROVINCIAL PARK AND
GRINDSTONE PROVINCIAL RECREATION PARK

PARKS BRANCH
MANITOBA DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES

August 1987

HECLA/GRINDSTONE MANAGEMENT PLAN PROCESS

STEP 1 Publish introductory report with specific objectives for Hecla and Grindstone	May 1984
STEP 2 Informational meetings with public input	July 1984
STEP 3 Publish responses and finalize objectives	March 1985
STEP 4 Prepare and publish draft management plan	November 1985
STEP 5 Informational meetings with public input	February/ April 1986
STEP 6 Publish responses and final plan and convey to the Minister	August 1987

INTRODUCTION

The management plan for Hecla Provincial Park and Grindstone Provincial Recreation Park was formally approved in May, 1987, by the Honourable Leonard Harapiak, Minister of Natural Resources. This report provides a summary of revisions made to the Draft Management Plan as a result of public review during the winter of 1986. Whereas many of the draft plan proposals for recreational use, management and development of the park's resources were received positively, this report emphasizes those areas where most concerns were expressed.

This summary of public input is part of the final step in the planning process aimed at developing a 10 year management plan for Hecla and Grindstone Provincial Parks. Public participation in this process began in May 1984 with the publication of a background information report.

Meetings were held in Gimli, Riverton, Hecla Island, Winnipeg and Manigotagan in the summer of 1984 to review the background report and encourage discussion. Thirteen groups or organizations commented on the report at that time, and approximately 500 people were contacted. During the winter of 1986, the public was invited to comment on the draft management plan.

Meetings were held in Riverton, Gimli, Manigotagan, Winnipeg, Wanipigow and Seymourville to encourage participation. Twenty-two groups or organizations and individuals provided comments. The current mailing list contains approximately 1,000 names.

The subject of moose management on Hecla Island dominated discussions in Winnipeg and the Interlake communities. Other topics raised at meetings included the proposed reclassification of Hecla from a Natural to a Heritage park, protection of archaeological resources, and waterfowl hunting on Hecla Island. While the communities of Riverton, Manigotagan and Seymourville expressed particular interest in tourism associated with Hecla Provincial Park, some local residents had concerns about the park's boundary, the silica sand operation on Black Island, and commercial fishing.

The management plan has been revised in accordance with the changes described in this report and has now been adopted as the official plan for Hecla Provincial Park and Grindstone Provincial Recreation Park. The Parks Branch wishes to acknowledge and express appreciation to everyone who contributed to the development of the management plan.

GROUPS COMMENTING ON THE BACKGROUND REPORT

The Hecla Ex-Landowners Association

The Interlake Development Corporation

The Grindstone Cottage Owner's Association

The Manigotagan Community Council

The Riverton Area Development Board

The Northland Bowhunter's Association

The Icelandic-Canadian Fron

The Eastern Region of Northern Community Councils

Manigotagan Development Limited

The Hollow Water Indian Band

The Canadian Institute of Forestry

The Manitoba Wildlife Federation

The Manitoba Naturalists Society

GROUPS COMMENTING ON THE DRAFT MANAGEMENT PLAN

The Interlake Development Corporation

The Grindstone Cottage Owner's Association

The Northland Bowhunter's Association

The Manitoba Wildlife Federation (Waterfowl & Big Game Committees)

The Manitoba Naturalists Society

The Village of Riverton

The Transcona Game and Fish Association

The National and Provincial Parks Association of Canada

The Association of Manitoba Archaeologists

The Arborg Rod and Gun Club

The Fisher Game and Fish Association

The Gimli and District Wildlife Association

The Manitoba Archaeological Association

The Environmental Action Committee of the University of Winnipeg

The Dennis Lake Wildlife Association

The Manitoba Bowhunting Records Clubs

The South Interlake Archery Club

The Woodlands and District Wildlife Club

The Ecological Reserves Advisory Committee

The Manitoba Environmental Council Wildlife Committee

The Winnipeg Chapter of the Manitoba Muzzle Loaders

The Brandon Wildlife Association

PUBLIC CONCERNS AND COMMENTS, DISCUSSION AND ACTIONS

This section is organized with the major areas of concern stated in the left hand column. The range of public comment, a brief discussion, and the actions taken in the final plan are presented on the right side of the page. Comments listed are mostly direct quotes intended to illustrate the various points of view expressed on a particular subject.

Reclassification of Hecla Park

Range of Public Comments

- Until properties in the Hecla Village are completely publicly owned we should withhold any heritage designation.
- If Hecla becomes a provincial Heritage park, the present hunting season for moose will be closed for the purpose of public viewing and interpretation of the flora and fauna, including the moose.
- It is a matter of pride for us to see Hecla made a Heritage park.
- The cultural history of Hecla and Black Islands mandates the reclassificcation to a Heritage park.
- A Heritage park designation is an appropriate tribute to citizens of Icelandic and Native origin.

Discussion

Parks are classified on the basis of their history and patterns of use, as well as the significance of their natural and cultural features within the system of Provincial Parks.

Although park classification suggests direction for management and development, it does not prescribe management and development conditions.

Other plans such as management plans, interim management guidelines and operational plans provide details of park management and development. A position either to allow or not allow hunting could be applied to any park land regardless of its classification. The concern about land ownership is acknowledged, however, this is not considered to bear upon park classification.

Action

Hecla will be reclassified as a Provincial Heritage Park.

Special Areas

Range of Public Comments

- Our major concern with the Draft Management Plan for Hecla Provincial Park is the lack of protection for ecologically sensitive areas within the broad zones established on the islands.
- Your approach seems to have been to zone broadly and ignore the smaller specific sites.
- None of these (smaller sites deserving special protection within the park) have been designated or recognized in the Draft Management Plan.

Discussion

Special Areas may be designated within any zone. Facilities for interpretation of features may be provided, but commercial resource use will not be permitted to encroach upon or occur within any Special Area.

Except for the Pipestone Rocks, known Special Areas have not been identified on zoning maps. There are two reasons why: one is that identifying such areas could lead to their destruction, either accidentally or purposely; the other is that these sites are numerous and new ones are being identified continuously. A special areas catalogue is an early implementation priority that will be maintained as an adjunct to the management plan.

Action

The Zoning Section will be revised to include preparation and maintenance of a special areas catalogue.

Moose Management (Hunting vs. No Hunting)

Discussion

The draft management plan contained two options as follows:

1) Continue to provide sport hunting for moose on an annual basis on Hecla Island, or

2) Designate whole of Hecla Island as a wildlife refuge.

For every argument favouring a particular option, there were one or more contrary viewpoints. The main points of discussion were in respect to loss of sport hunting opportunities, compromising public safety through hunting, reduced viewability and appreciation of moose as a result of hunting, the possibility of a moose die-off if hunting did not take place, and economic benefits associated with the hunting and no hunting options for Hecla Island.

There were also certain scientific questions and hypotheses respecting moose presented in public discussions. In brief, these questions related to the topic of range carrying capacity, factors which influence populations, and visibility of hunted versus non-hunted animals.

Strongly held and divergent opinions among the public were illustrated through media coverage of public meetings and in public petitions. Indeed, Departmental wildlife and parks managers expressed sincerely held different views. The full record is available for review upon request.

Action

The final decision on this matter is to modify the approach to moose management on Hecla Island. Beginning in 1988 and thereafter, there will be no moose hunting seasons on Hecla Island except where special hunts may be allowed periodically for herd management.

Moose Management (Habitat Management)

Range of Public Comments

- As proposed, habitat management programs would at best be a "Bandaid" operation if the moose population is allowed to increase as has been suggested. Habitat would require clear cutting and regrowth of close to 25% of the present forest forage area with a lag time of five years to become top-notch habitat capable of remotely supplying sufficient food requirements.

- Managing parts of Hecla Island for moose to increase their populations and visitor viewing opportunities is fine.

- We support development of facilities that enhance viewing and interpretation of wildlife, but oppose habitat manipulation to increase population densities of wildlife such as moose either for sport hunting or viewing.

- We are opposed to the proposal for extensive "habitat management projects" on Hecla Island to enhance moose habitat and increase the island's carrying capacity.

Discussion

Concerns were expressed about the intent of habitat management programs. Some expressed support for extensive habitat management programs if they were required to support large number of moose; while others believed such programs were not responsible stewardship. It was felt that such an approach would change areas of natural forest unnecessarily, and only increase the potential for over-populating the island.

Action

The notion of habitat management will be retained but only in terms of small-scale activity employed to enhance viewing opportunities by attracting animals, or as part of specific scientific research. There will be no general clearing of forested areas.

Waterfowl Hunting and Trapping on Hecla Island

Range of Public Comments

- We are not adverse to projects to benefit waterfowl or reasonable management practices where necessary, but are opposed to the refuge concept on Hecla Island. The proposed closure of hunting seasons on Hecla Island, which to our knowledge has proven to be non-conflicting to the island's use, leaves us in a quandary as to the rationale.

- I personally don't believe trapping will affect tourism in any way. Most fur-bearing animals are nocturnal and most viewings are road kills. The trapping season takes place in the tourist off-season. Hunting to most people is a form of recreation; trapping is a way of making a living.

- There is a need for areas where the general public can observe wildlife in its natural state without fear of being shot at by some hunter with poor eyesight.

Discussion

The draft plan proposed the closure of trapping on Hecla Island and was vague on the subject of waterfowl hunting. These activities occur to a limited extent in the marshes at the southern end of the island. The waterfowl season extends from the latter part of September to the end of November.

On the basis of public input respecting trapping and waterfowl hunting, the final plan has been revised and clarified to indicate the continuation of these activities.

Action

Waterfowl hunting and trapping will be permitted activities in appropriate locations in the Hecla Marshes.

Hunting in Grindstone Provincial Park

Range of Public Comments

- We support the designation of the area (in Grindstone Provincial Park) between the lake and the road as a no-hunting area.

- We would further propose support for extending this area of refuge a minimum of three hundred metres along the west side of the road.

Action

The final plan will incorporate a road-corridor refuge extending 300 metres from either side of the centreline of all access, subdivision and block roads in Grindstone Provincial Recreation Park.

Hunting and Trapping on Black and Deer Islands

Range of Public Comments

- Trapping and hunting are not natural processes, at least as presently practiced, and deplete and otherwise affect the animal components of biological communities and ecosystems.

- Natural environment zones of the park should be allowed to operate in as near natural fashion as possible.

Discussion

Natural environment zones for the most part will be managemed following a "hands-off" approach. Hunting and trapping in such zones were proposed to continue however, recognizing their tradition as a means of livelihood for many in the region.

Action

No change from the proposals in the draft plan.

Marsh Developments

Range of Public Comments

- We want to start by applauding the Parks Branch for its forthright approach in terms of wildlife management, particularly in the area of waterfowl. The habitat work outlined in the plan is what we consider a very refreshing approach to a long-term problem.

- With your new marina, and your walkways and your photographers and all the people that your park will no doubt attract, the breeding of giant Canadian geese and mallard ducks in that area will stop.

Discussion

This latter concern will be carefully taken into account with regard to developing and implementing more facilities for visitor interpretation in the marsh.

Experience in other areas, such as the Alf Hole Goose Sanctuary in Whiteshell Provincial Park, indicates that viewing and interpretation of waterfowl can occur with minimal or no disturbance to waterfowl. In the controlled marsh on Hecla Island, nesting islands have been constructed to attract geese in particular. As marsh development continues, additional nesting island can be constructed, and interpretative signs, boardwalks and trails will be employed as techniques to control people's movement away from "sensitive areas".

Action

No change from the proposals in the draft plan.

Native Cultural History and Interpretation

Range of Public Comments

- Cultural interpretation programs for the Icelandic and Native peoples on Hecla and Black Islands are ambitious but, at the same time, realistic and practical.

- It is incorrect to associate Hecla Island with Icelandic occupancy only and Black Island with Native occupancy only. The Native people used Hecla Island as well.

- Full exploitation of the sacred ceremonies through reconstruction of a Midewin Lodge may be considered in bad taste by large elements of the native population.

- Special attention should be given to consulting with Indian people of the surrounding region and the Manitoba Indian Community in general. Their direction should be used in planning interpretative developments.

Discussion

Much attention has been focused on the Icelandic settlement on Hecla Island. It is recognized that Native people occupied and used the resources of Hecla Island, and this will be reflected in interpretative programs on Hecla and in other areas of the park. The need for close co-operation with Native communities is acknowledged, specifically those on the east shore of Lake Winnipeg. The development of an orientation centre in one of these communities, in conjunction with satellite interpretative events on Black Island, was proposed in the Draft Management Plan.

Action

Interpretative programs and visitor services information will contain both Native and Icelandic components. Research organizations such as the Universities of Winnipeg and Manitoba, The Manitoba Museum of Man and Nature, the Treaty and Aboriginal Rights Research Centre of Manitoba Inc., and the Historic Resources Branch will be consulted in the development of such programs. Input from the respective communities will also be encouraged, and the Parks and Historic Resources Branches will provide consultation to these communities should they wish to puruse and develop their own initiatives for tourism and cultural interpretation.

Archaeological Resources

Range of Public Comments

- The proposal for widespread developments and resource extraction industries will undoubtedly impact upon a number of (archaeological) sites, some of which may be very important. We request that a policy statement be inserted into your final plan to ensure the protection or salvage of these archaeological resources.

- A general survey of Indian archaeological sites should be conducted.

- Consideration should be given to archaeological testing and salvaging around Icelandic buildings and settlement areas where destruction, development or restoration are proposed.

Discussion

The Cultural Heritage Zone on Black Island is intended to ensure protection of the archaeological resources located within it, and to provide opportunities for research. A review and referral process exists between the Parks and Historic Resources Branches to review projects where archaeological resources are of interest. Furthermore, a permit process ensures that activities respecting the study, use or removal of resources within the parks are conducted in a manner consistent with park plans and programs. The terms and conditions incorporate the requirements of all relevant Provincial Acts and Regulations.

Action

The contents of the draft plan regarding archaeological resources will be retained in the final plan.

Silica Sand Operation on Black Island

Range of Public Comments

- We are disappointed with the decision to allow the silica sand mine on Black Island to continue but respect the economic reason behind this.

- The silica sand operation on Black Island is not in keeping with the purpose of a Natural Environment Zone, and a similar deposit in the vicinity of Seymourville on the east side should be developed instead.

Discussion

The silica sand operation on Black Island has been in operation for almost 60 years which is recognized as a historic but noncomforming land use. Once this operation is complete, the pit will be rehabilitated. New operations of this nature will not be permitted in the park. A 1985 feasibility study of sand deposits indicates that the deposit in the vicinity of Seymourville will be the most feasible to develop in the region, in future.

Action

The silica mine is acknowledged as a nonconforming use.

Commercial Fishing

Range of Public Comments

- Right now, recreational boaters have little or no regard for my nets.

- The Open Water Zone implies to me that you might consider restricting commercial fishing to specific areas. Because commercial species of fish know only physical restrictions and move all over the lake, I see restrictions placed upon me as to where I can fish a real impairment to my business.

Discussion

Commercial fishing is recognized as a traditional activity and as an important means of livelihood. Public information and awareness programs are identified as the primary means to avoid or minimize conflicts among commercial fishing and recreational boating.

Action

If boating conflicts become a serious concern the Fisheries Branch and commerical fishermen on Lake Winnipeg would be consulted for recommended changes.

Marina and Recreational Boating

Range of Public Comments

- The enticement of primitive campsites on Black and Deer Islands and greater emphasis on recreational boating through the development of a major marina

facility may encourage inexperienced people to partake in more boating excursions. Lake Winnipeg is a dangerous and unpredictable body of water and increased boating should be a public safety concern.

- I would welcome the opportunity to come to Hecla Island and be able to get out on the water, except that I don't have the necessary navigational skills.

- Government marina developments will drive the private sector marina operation out of business because the government has the best areas, can afford the "luxury" infrastructure to make their marinas more attractive, and can charge the lowest rate.

Discussion

Hecla Provincial Park is recognized as a major tourist destination with a potential for water based recreation unparalleled between the Great Lakes and Pacific coast. The Management Plan recognizes the potential dangers of boating on Lake Winnipeg however, and indicates that programs and services will be designed with safe boating as a foremost concern.

There is a growing public demand for a greater variety of services including a fully-serviced marina. Private sector involvement will be sought to operate this facility, and a restructuring of current fees would be undertaken commensurate with the provision of new and upgraded services.

Action

The proposal to develop a fully-serviced marina will be retained.

Camping in Grindstone Provincial Recreation Park

Range of Public Comments

- As a cottage owner on Grindstone, I believe public camping would have a negative effect on the enjoyment and value of the park.

- The potential development of commercial campgrounds is an aspect that should be thoroughly evaluated in terms of necessity. Should this evaluation come about, the Association requests the opportunity for input.

Discussion

The concerns of cottage owners respecting a possible campground development are acknowledged.

Action

Grindstone Cottage Owner's Association will be consulted should any proposal to establish a commercial campground be considered.

Developments North of Little Grindstone Poing and in the Vicinity of Well's Harbour

Range of Public Comments

- We do not support the expansion of cottaging north of Little Grindstone.
- We wish to go on record that we do not favour the setting of any development that would affect the natural beauty of the Well's Harbour area.

Discussion

No intensive developments are proposed north of Little Grindstone Point, nor do zoning provisions in the Management Plan provide for such developments. Any proposed rezoning over the 10-year life of the plan would be subject to public review.

Action

The northern end of Grindstone Point will retain its status as a Natural Environment Zone.

Four-Season Family Vacation Resort

Range of Public Comments

- I do not feel there is a need for this type of establishment on Hecla Island. It has the Inn (and this would take business away from it), the vacation cabins, the campground and, on Grindstone, the cottage lots. The burden on the Gull Harbour area would be immense.
- Excellent, except for increased private sector development.
- I very much like the area and welcome private development that would allow me and may family to enjoy the park.

- I do not agree with the proposed sale of 50% of the accommodation units in the proposed 4-season resort.

- Cottaging should be located on Grindstone only.

- We are pleased to note that there is provision for private sector development of a family resort based on a minimum design standard.

Discussion

Hecla is intended to function as a tourist destination area. The park has recently been identified in the "Go World Class" Canada/ Manitoba Tourism Development Agreement as a priority tourist location. The proposed 4-season family vacation resort is consistent with this role for Hecla. A facility with self-contained units suitable for extended family stays would complement the existing Gull Harbour Resort. The plan retains opportunities for the private sector to submit proposals through tendering, for a resort facility that would complement the existing Gull Harbour Resort and Convention Centre. The possibility of sale of title or leasehold interest in accommodation units is also retained if incentives by the public sector, such as "Go World Class" program, are not available.

Action

No change from the proposals in the draft plan. Any new accommodation would complement the existing resort and provide lower cost alternatives for vacationing families.

Trails

Range of Public Comments

- Vehicles other than cars should be banned from Hecla Island. Provision for this type of recreation can be provided in Grindstone Park away from the cottage area.

- We support the proposed major expansion of snowmobile trails connecting Gull Harbor, Riverton and Well's Harbour with proper shelters along the route. A much higher priority with us is the development of a trail from the cottaging area to Well's Harbour to function as a hiking trail in the summer and perhaps a snowmobile or cross-country ski trail in the winter.

Discussion

Trail proposals were generally well supported. There will be no expansion of snowmobile trails on Hecla with the exception of a link to connect with a Lake Winnipeg-to-Grindstone system. There will also be some minor upgrading of the existing Hecla trail.

Action

The final plan will clarify the above actions and will indicate that the Parks Branch will provide planning assistance for a co-operative public hiking trail to Well's Harbour as an early priority.

Aircraft

Range of Public Comments

- For some time, we have considered providing an air service from Winnipeg and possibly other points such as Minneapolis, into the Hecla-Grindstone area. We feel that a modern air service could be of value to the Gull Harbour Resort operation.

- Please no aircraft runway near the campground or float planes at Gull Harbour. Too noisy, accidents re boats and planes.

- Please keep aircraft operations out of Hecla! We need a certain amount of space free from noise. A float plan base, a turf runway and aerial sightseeing tours have no place at what up to now has been a peaceful and quiet island. There is plenty of aircraft access in nearby Riverton! No aircraft please!

Discussion

The location and siting of the proposed runway identified in the Draft Management Plan has considered noise impact from aircraft using such a facility. The identified site is located approximately five miles from the Gull Harbour area and is oriented in a northwest-southeast direction so that take-off and approaches would avoid built-up areas. The proposal is for a turf runway which, in itself, would restrict the type and size of aircraft feasible.

With regard to float planes, guidelines for development and use of Recreation Harbour Zones (at Gull Harbour, Hecla Village and Little Grindstone) will be developed with due consideration for public safety and noise.

Action

The need for aircraft facilities will be assessed as visitation increases in the future.

Occupancy

Range of Public Comments

- There is no place for cottages on Hecla Island.
- If housing was provided for staff in a nearby community, it would give the staff a little chance to get involved with community activities and would develop a sense of belonging. Riverton would welcome the people in their community. All would benefit.
- Park Rangers should live on Hecla Island.

Discussion

The plan sets a goal of 60% of all park staff to reside outside the park. Because there is no school or bus service, full-time employees, particularly those with families, will be encouraged to live off the island. Staff quarters will continue to be provided for seasonal employees and those whose presence in the park on a 24-hour basis is required.

Action

No change from the proposals in the draft plan.

Park Boundaries

Range of Public Comments

- The park boundary along the east shore may encompass some prime recreational lands on the mainland.
- The proposed boundaries of Hecla Island Provincial Park should be reduced to cover only those areas that are presently utilized and the areas proposed for public usage recreation.
- The proposed boundaries of Grindstone Provincial Park should be reduced to cover only the areas that are presently developed and those marked for future cottage development.

Discussion

The park boundary along the east shore of Lake Winnipeg (established in 1969) is described as a line that follows the sinuosities of the shoreline. Whereas this line can fluctuate depending on water levels, it does not include any of the mainland within the park boundaries. However, it does encompass all offshore islands.

The suggestion to exclude all lands from Hecla and Grindstone except those developed presently or proposed for such in the future, does not take account of the full range of park needs and purposes. Provincial parks are established to conserve and protect natural and cultural resources in addition to facilitating outdoor recreation.

Action

No change from the proposals in the draft plan.

Barrier-free Access

Range of Public Comments

- It is with a great deal of concern that our Association notes that nowhere in your proposal is consideration given to those 10% of our population that have a physical disability.

- Recommendation: That before any further development is undertaken, consultation with groups representing the physically disabled be undertaken.

Discussion

Work has been undertaken to improve the level of barrier-free access to facilities in Hecla Provincial Park including the shower building in the campground, the new Visitor Services Centre and restaurant, and all new improvements to the Gull Harbour Resort.

Action

Where feasible all new buildings and the new Hecla Rental Cabin Plan, will provide for barrier-free access.